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Chairman: Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 113: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (A/49/176 and Add.1, A/49/219 and Add.1, A/49/406, A/49/445, A/49/527, A/49/587; A/C.5/48/37 and Add.1, A/C.5/48/45; A/C.5/49/5, A/C.5/49/6 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/C.5/49/13, A/C.5/49/14)

1. Mr. CONNOR (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the Organization was facing serious problems in terms of the morale, capability and dedication of its staff and that in order to address those problems it was necessary to rekindle in every staff member a sense of pride in serving the United Nations. To that end management must be improved and staff development encouraged. That would involve a change in the management culture and in the system of justice, from adversarial to supportive. Efforts should focus on removing the causes of dispute.

2. On a positive note, the current strategy to reform human resources management and the system of administration of justice had the support of the staff, and a good beginning had been made. The reports before the Fifth Committee represented the first step in remedying management shortcomings and in developing the Organization's main asset - its staff.

3. Mr. HALLIDAY (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) said that management of the Organization's human resources, to which more than three quarters of its financial resources related, had a direct impact on the Secretariat's efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness to mandates. The question was thus at the cutting edge of change within the global Secretariat. The reports before the Committee would enable it to look ahead to the creation of a modern human resources management system and a new management culture.

4. The report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/49/527) indicated a decrease in the number of both unrepresented and overrepresented countries, with a corresponding increase in the number of Member States within range. The report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/587) reflected the progress towards the achievement of gender balance and outlined initiatives required to achieve the goals set by the Secretary-General. While 33 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution were held by women, special efforts would be needed to achieve the target set for 1995. The Secretary-General indicated a number of measures in that regard, including succession planning, networking, and the use of search agencies to target women candidates, including those from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. The report on staff training (A/49/406) detailed all training activities in the current biennium, while the report on human resources management policies (A/49/445) provided a retrospective of the activities of the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) during the reporting period.

5. The report on the reform of the internal system of justice (A/C.5/49/13) set out a series of steps to address the current inadequacies in the system. The entire process must be simplified and rendered more transparent, thus making

it possible to contain costs and increase effectiveness to the satisfaction of both management and staff. The approval of the General Assembly would be sought in respect of various new concepts, which would then be refined on the basis of guidance from the Assembly in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs. The proposals emphasized the early reconciliation of differences through such mechanisms as ombudsman panels to mediate disputes. It was also proposed to transform the Joint Appeals Board into an arbitration board, staffed with full-time professionals as opposed to volunteers. Full-time professional handling of disciplinary cases was also proposed. The changes were expected to result in a more responsive and efficient system of reconciliation and discipline.

6. The strategy for human resources management identified a series of interrelated initiatives for improving management in the Secretariat. The key elements were human resources planning, career management, development of a responsive management culture, good staff-management relations, performance appraisal, enhanced attrition and delegation of authority to programme managers. Human resources planning must be tied to the Organization's overall strategy and be responsive to specific mandates. Improved planning capacity would make the Organization better able to anticipate vacancies and identify the best persons to fill them.

7. The development of a supportive and responsive management environment was critical. Staff members must be empowered to contribute to their maximum potential. Training of managers must facilitate such empowerment, so essential to a new culture in which management embraced communication, supportiveness, transparency and participation. Training would be increasingly geared to meeting organizational requirements, career growth and developing competencies that would underpin productivity, promotion and mobility.

8. The changing management culture had already led to enhanced staff-management relations. The dialogue on the reform of the system of justice had been particularly productive, and it was expected that the work of the Joint Advisory Committee and of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee would also benefit. Staff representatives would be consulted and involved in all aspects of implementing the proposed human resources management strategy.

9. The new performance appraisal system, to be introduced in 1995, was central to better management. A pilot project had already been conducted, and the results were now being reviewed. The new system called for training of both managers and other staff members. By introducing goal-setting and work-planning, the new system would require both managers and staff to establish jointly the work to be accomplished. The manager must determine that the work was consistent with the departmental goal and the medium-term plan. The system would also help to identify staff strengths and weaknesses, and suggest appropriate action. It would initiate a dialogue between manager and staff, and oblige managers to measure performance against standards that were meaningful to the work of the Organization.

10. Many functions would be delegated to programme managers in order to eliminate unnecessary communication and clearance procedures. That would allow

OHRM to focus on priority areas, including planning and vacancy management, policy development, performance appraisal and management audit.

11. The strategy also included greater use of a buy-out/early retirement option, to enable management to better satisfy needs for greater staff turnover, skill re-engineering, enhanced manager leadership and morale building. In particular enhanced turnover at the top of the General Service, Professional and Director grades would provide greater flexibility, allow for promotion of competent staff, improve human resources management and enhance productivity.

12. The pace of change was accelerating. Political changes in the role of the Organization had not been matched by corresponding management changes. Several of the reports before the Committee reflected the Secretary-General's vision for the development of a modern human resources management system, instead of providing a mere retrospective of past performance. With the support of the Committee, the Secretariat could work towards additional improvements for the biennium 1996-1997. At that time it was hoped to present a restructured Office of Human Resources Management with the focus on service. It was intended to create special teams within OHRM to plan and effectively support United Nations human resources world wide.

13. In implementing the changes, OHRM, provided that it was equipped with the tools, intended to become the driving force of a modern management system, in the conviction that the optimal management of the Organization's greatest asset - its human resources - represented the best means of enabling the United Nations to meet its changing and complex mandates in the years ahead. The Committee's support in initiating such changes, including the provision of adequate resources, was critical.

14. Mr. SEVAN (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services and United Nations Security Coordinator) said that the report on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations (A/C.5/49/6 and Add.1 and Corr.1) was submitted by the Secretary-General on behalf of and with the approval of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). The report highlighted matters of serious concern to ACC and was based on information provided by United Nations organizations. It covered the period from 1 July 1993 to 30 June 1994, but all cases involving the death of a staff member up to 3 October 1994 had been included.

15. There was increasing concern about the safety and security of staff members because in some countries their work for the United Nations meant that they were the targets of attack. The issue was one of paramount importance to the Secretary-General and the executive heads of all the organizations concerned, as well as to the staff at large. The United Nations was conducting an increasing number of complicated operations, often in a hostile environment. If staff members were willing to risk their lives to achieve the goals of the Organization, they must be fully protected. Paragraphs 7 and 17 of the report described the efforts to improve staff security. The subject had been extensively discussed at an ad hoc inter-agency meeting on security in May 1994,

the recommendations of which would be included in a report to the General Assembly. But more needed to be done, and the Secretary-General was counting on the active assistance of Member States in that regard. The primary responsibility for the protection of staff members and their dependants rested with the host Governments. ACC had welcomed the General Assembly's decision to conclude a convention on staff security, which represented the first crucial step. He was grateful to the Governments which had proposed measures to enhance staff security.

16. The report dealt not only with the arrest and detention of staff members but also with the loss of life. As of 1 July 1993, 18 staff members had been killed, and information was now to hand that 39 national staff members had been killed in Rwanda in April 1994. That figure would increase as additional information became available. A total of 88 staff members had thus lost their lives since 1992. He was also seeking news of staff members missing in the Middle East, including Mr. Alec Collett, but had so far obtained no credible reports.

17. Annex III to the report contained detailed information about the arrest and detention of officials, and annex II contained a consolidated list of staff members who were under arrest or detention or were missing as at 30 June 1994. In that connection, the situation of national staff employed by United Nations organizations in Rwanda remained precarious. Four staff members had been arrested during the past week, but no information about them had yet been obtained from the Rwandese authorities.

18. Respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials was one of the paramount conditions for effective exercise of the responsibilities entrusted to United Nations organizations by Member States. It was to be hoped that the discussions in the Committee and in the Sixth Committee would help to identify the best ways of ensuring staff security and safety.

19. Mrs. DAES (Joint Inspection Unit) said that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on the advancement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/176) reviewed action taken to eliminate bias against women and establish and maintain gender equity in the Secretariat and focused on the opportunity to improve the status and advancement of women under the new policies of greater transparency and accountability and strategic management of human resources. The report summarized the disappointing history of the efforts to enhance the role of women and examined the failure to overcome the obstacles thereto in the light of the new policy initiatives. The extensive tables and statistics contained in the report painted a gloomy picture. There were six major problem areas.

20. Firstly, the 1995 targets for percentages of women in Professional and higher-level posts subject to geographical distribution would not be met: the current figure of 32 per cent for all women staff fell short of the target of 35 per cent; the figure of 14 per cent for women in senior posts was scarcely half way to the target of 25 per cent; and the figure of 11 per cent for women in policy-making posts at the end of 1993 was closer to zero than to the target

of 50 per cent. Secondly, the annual rate of increase in the promotion of women was still slow. The pool of women candidates at each higher level was steadily decreasing, and the average woman Professional was currently at about the P-3 level. Thirdly, there was a very serious problem with regard to the appointment of women at the Professional and higher levels. New recruits at those levels were overwhelmingly men. From 1986 to 1989 only 2 of the 66 officials appointed at the Director level or above were women, and for 1990-1993 the proportion was 10 out of 63. The financial crises and other factors had hampered women's recruitment and advancement, but at the present pace it would take another 50 years to achieve the overall "equitable balance" of men and women which the General Assembly had expected to be reached by 1980. It was unsurprising that past action programmes for women had bogged down when there were so few women at the top levels. Fourthly, the vast majority of women in the Secretariat - the 4,600 in the General Service - had been almost totally ignored by the action programmes. That neglect must be remedied. Fifthly, the few women in senior posts were distributed unevenly, and most Secretariat units had no women at the Director or higher levels. The Secretariat had regularly cited the importance of holding senior managers accountable for improving the status of women in individual units, but that was not being done. Sixthly, the representation of women from the geographic regions varied considerably around the 35 per cent target. Member States themselves should set an example by improving the representation of women in the United Nations, but they had not done much better than the Secretariat. In 1994 only 8 of the 184 missions in New York had women heads or acting heads.

21. The Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat had concluded in 1991 that the Secretariat had fallen far short of its obligation to establish gender equity. That conclusion remained true in 1994.

22. The JIU report assessed the continuing obstacles to improving the status of women in the Secretariat. Three of its recommendations dealt with dynamic human resources management. Firstly, the Secretary-General was urged to continue the comprehensive report on personnel matters, now before the Committee in document A/C.5/49/5, as a biennial human resources report. The second recommendation called for strengthening of the Office of Human Resources Management, and the third called on the Secretary-General to ensure that future reporting on human resources reflected greater accountability and follow-up. The fourth recommendation recognized that those measures were not sufficient to secure improvement of the status of women and called for replacement of the ineffective action programmes with a new results-oriented programme. The recommended programme included 10 steps, which were set out on pages iv and v of the report.

23. It was regrettable that the Secretary-General's comments on the JIU report had only just been issued (A/49/176/Add.1) and that they made only a few scattered references to the matters discussed in the report. They referred the General Assembly to two further reports, one on a strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization (A/C.5/49/5) and the other on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/587). The late issue of those documents would hamper an informed discussion by the Committee of

the important issues involved. However, there were two encouraging developments. Firstly, the Secretary-General had commented that the first three JIU recommendations were in line with his current plans for strengthening human resources management and that several of the 10 steps of the programme recommended by JIU had already been or would soon be implemented. Secondly, the JIU report had been completed before the new Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management had taken up their posts. They had both started to make drastic changes and take action to improve the situation of women in the Secretariat. The JIU recommendations would assist them in that endeavour.

24. The JIU report had been prepared in the conviction that its recommendations would contribute to the enhancement of the Secretariat's human resources and to a new beginning for the advancement of women. The time had come for determined action to fulfil the Secretariat's obligation to achieve gender equity. JIU would again assess progress in 1995 as part of its review of women's programmes and advancement in the United Nations system.

25. Mr. OTHMAN (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the JIU report entitled "Towards a new system of performance appraisal in the United Nations Secretariat: requirements for successful implementation" said that the new system was intrinsically connected with the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations and, more specifically, with the establishment of the system of accountability and responsibility in the United Nations called for in General Assembly resolution 48/218. One of the elements to be included in the new system was performance evaluations for all staff, including senior officials. A number of delegations had voiced concern about the adequacy of the current performance evaluation system in the Secretariat and had requested JIU to review the matter. A similar review had also been requested by the Secretariat. The objectives of the study were first to examine past experience with performance evaluation in the Secretariat and in the light of relevant and positive experiences elsewhere, especially in the United Nations system. The second objective was to highlight the actions needed to ensure that the new system would be successfully implemented.

26. To meet those objectives, JIU had reviewed the available documentation on previous, current and proposed Secretariat performance evaluation processes. It had reviewed numerous articles and reports on performance appraisal issues, problems and experiences from sources inside and outside the United Nations system. It had also discussed the subject with Secretariat officials and staff representatives and with officials of inter-agency secretariats and organizations of the United Nations system. In addition, it had conducted a detailed review of more than 100 Secretariat staff files at Geneva in order to assess patterns and problems with the existing performance evaluation system.

27. Chapter II of the report summarized three important sources of knowledge for the new Secretariat system, namely: the work of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), with emphasis on principles and guidelines for performance appraisals; the work of the Consultative Committee on Administrative

Questions (CCAQ), especially that relating to performance appraisal of managers; and organizations in which strengthened performance appraisal systems had recently been implemented, such as those in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

28. Chapter III dealt with the five different attempts to create a sound performance evaluation system over the previous 17 years. All attempts had failed because they had measured the characteristics and traits of staff subjectively, rather than on the basis of actual performance and work. Not only were the ratings under the current system excessively vague, but nearly all staff members received the ratings "excellent" or "very good". Staff moved through their careers with occasional promotions and steady salary step increases for longevity, unaffected by the work they actually did. The system was therefore dysfunctional and provided no reward or recognition for excellent performance, and no sanctions or corrective actions for ineffective or mediocre staff.

29. Under the proposed new system, performance objectives would be established in advance and supervisor/staff communication would be improved through regular discussions of performance and feedback. The new system stressed the importance of involving staff in the development of performance agreements and assessment of their own performance, making staff members accountable for results using measurable and objective performance standards. Those and other concepts were generally consistent with the principles and guidelines established by ICSC and followed the pattern of positive experiences of other United Nations organizations.

30. Previous systems had failed not only because of inherent deficiencies but also because the Secretariat had been unable to implement them successfully. Success was now critical, however, in order to ensure the future success and credibility of the Organization. The Secretariat had thousands of creative and dedicated staff who received little recognition and other staff who were ineffective but who suffered no ill effects in consequence. Unfortunately, the latter group had received considerable negative media attention in recent years while the performance of the hard-working staff went largely unnoticed. In order for the new system to succeed, the Secretary-General and the General Assembly should exercise their respective oversight functions through careful monitoring of its development and implementation. A number of requirements, which could be broken down into three sets of recommendations, also needed to be met.

31. The first set of recommendations dealt with fundamental prerequisites, namely, the introduction of a performance appraisal system within a supportive management and organizational culture and environment; a clear commitment on the part of the Secretary-General and senior officials to the full implementation of the new system; and a clear delineation of the roles of managers in the Secretariat to enable them to carry out effectively their new responsibilities and evaluation of the performance of all managers, including assistant secretaries-general and under-secretaries-general.

32. A second set of recommendations addressed key technical elements. The Secretary-General should prepare a mission statement and give high priority to the establishment of an integrated system linking mandates, objectives, strategies, work programmes and individual staff performance. He should ensure objective, transparent and fair ratings and make the new performance appraisal reports the key input for rewards and sanctions to be vigorously implemented. He should also establish a formal full-time unit, probably within OHRM, to deal with the new system.

33. The last set of recommendations stemmed from constraints that might adversely affect the successful implementation of the new system. The Secretary-General and the General Assembly should revise and expand staff training plans for the new system in order to ensure that all Secretariat staff, including managers, were prepared for the new system rather than continue the current rush to complete training by December 1994 without adequate resources. On the basis of the experiences of other organizations and recognizing the drastic change which the new system represented in the organizational culture of the United Nations, 1995 should be a transitional year for the introduction of the new system, particularly since certain elements of accountability and responsibility were not yet in place. Additional financial resources should be provided to meet the requirements of the new system. The necessary resources could temporarily be obtained by delaying staff salary increments. In future, the granting of such increments should be based exclusively on performance-based considerations.

34. In order for the new system to succeed, all staff, from the Secretary-General down, must be committed to its implementation. The system must also have the resources required for its proper implementation and must be considered as a management tool within the larger framework of accountability and responsibility in a results-oriented management and organizational structure. A follow-up study was envisaged in two or three years' time to review the implementation and impact of the new system.

35. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that her delegation would welcome information on the current status of the report which the Joint Inspection Unit had been requested to prepare in 1993 on certain other aspects of personnel policy. She noted that the report was not among the documents currently available to the Committee.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that the observation of the Cuban delegation had been noted and that the Secretariat would provide a response at a later meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (A/49/3 and Add.1 (chapters I, IV (section E), IX, XI, XII and XVII))

37. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) regretted the Secretariat's failure to provide members with the information requested in Economic and Social Council resolutions E/1994/21 and E/1994/41. He hoped that the information requested would be provided at an early date and that the financial implications of the action

required under the resolutions in question would be clearly reflected in the revised estimates for the biennium 1993-1994.

38. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that if and when revised estimates or statements of programme budget implications arising from the Council's work were submitted to the Committee, he hoped that the Secretariat would be able to confirm that rules 31.3 and 31.4 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council had been fully respected.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would take note of the comments made by the delegations of Uganda and the United Kingdom. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend that the General Assembly should take note of the report of the Economic and Social Council and that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of item 12.

40. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.